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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2016

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**MAYOR EMANUEL INTRODUCES MEASURE TO SUPPORT EXPANSION
OF EARLY LEARNING SPACES**

*Agreement is next step in establishment of Flagship Early Learning Center
at Harold Washington Library and Expansion to Fourteen Branches Across the City*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Public Library (CPL) today introduced an intergovernmental agreement that would authorize the Public Building Commission (PBC) to utilize designated funds for the expansion of early learning spaces throughout the City.

CPL will open an 18,000 square foot flagship location at Harold Washington Library Center with 14 additional satellite locations to follow. The expansion supports joint goals of the Library and the City of Chicago to provide access to quality early educational programming year round.

"From full-day kindergarten to programming in our libraries, early childhood learning centers are a continued investment in Chicago's children," said Mayor Emanuel. "This is the next step in providing the support they need in their early years to ensure success in college, career and in life."

The innovative early learning spaces will incorporate science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and the five practices of early learning – Talk, Sing, Read, Write and Play -- into the space itself. The early learning areas and CPL librarians will also focus on supporting parents and caregivers as a child's primary teacher.

"This opportunity allows us to imbed STEM learning -- which we know is an integral part of early learning and development -- directly into our library spaces using innovative design and partnerships with thought leaders like the 30 Million Words Project, Erikson Institute and the Chicago Children's Museum," said Library Commissioner Brian Bannon. "We are leveraging our unique structure of being in every Chicago neighborhood to provide access to early learning opportunities to our youngest patrons, right in their backyard."

Studies show that play is a primary building block for a child's development and successful play spaces inspire creativity, encourage interaction with materials and other children, and keep reading materials at eye level. The CPL early learning spaces will increase high quality learning experiences and will support the development of deeper learning skills through literacy and STEM experiences.

“The Public Building Commission is excited to work with the Chicago Public Library to create a vision for these spaces that support the Mayor’s commitment to bring creative design to each branch in support of our earliest learners,” said Felicia S. Davis, Executive Director of the PBC.

Chicago Public Library is a pioneer in early learning initiatives with cutting-edge programs available through 80 branch locations, and has longstanding experience championing early literacy and STEM learning. With more than ten million visits to neighborhood locations annually, CPL is among the city’s largest providers of free, high-quality early learning support. Each year more than 35,000 children and families participate in early literacy workshops provided by branch libraries. These programs are designed to support the basic building blocks for early literacy and success in school.

In 2011, the summer reading program was re-imagined to the “Summer Learning Challenge” to incorporate science, technology, engineering and math as well as creative discovery activities. Rahm’s Readers Summer Learning Challenge successfully engages more than 80,000 Chicago kids in STEM learning throughout the summer months. The five early-learning focus areas – Talk, Sing, Read, Write and Play – are included in all current CPL early learning programming because they play a critical role in children’s social and cognitive development. These five focus areas will be featured within the early learning locations.

The 18,000 square foot children’s space at Harold Washington Library Center will serve as the flagship early learning center, much like the existing YOUmedia for teens and Maker Lab for advanced manufacturing. The 14 satellite locations will draw inspiration from these current early-learning initiatives and the early learning prototype that opened in September 2014 at Chicago Public Library’s Albany Park location. Each of the following fourteen sites will provide STEM programming specific to the neighborhood each serves:

- Harold Washington Library Center
- Woodson Regional Library
- Sulzer Regional Library
- Austin Irving Branch
- Budlong Woods Branch
- Legler Branch
- Lozano Branch
- Little Village Branch
- Sherman Park Branch
- Toman Branch
- Kelly Branch
- South Chicago Branch
- Thurgood Marshall Branch
- West Englewood Branch
- West Pullman Branch

Design of these centers is informed by CPL’s strong ties to partners throughout the city, such as the Thirty Million Words Initiative, the Erikson Institute and the Chicago Children’s Museum.

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Since 1873, the Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services and was ranked number one in the U.S. and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, please call (312) 747-4050 or visit chipublib.org.